

MORPETH  
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.



**ANNUAL REPORT**

(FOR THE YEAR 1905)

OF THE

**Medical Officer of Health**

(J. P. PHILIP, M.D., D.H.P.,

*Fellow of the Royal Institute of Public Health*),

INCLUDING THE

**Report of the Sanitary Inspector**

(ANDREW ADAMS, A.S.I.)



MORPETH:

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# MORPETH RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

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## Annual Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Morpeth Rural District in 1905.

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour of laying before you my Annual Report. In compiling it I have adhered to the instructions of the Local Government Board.

Physical Features of the District.—Lying between the Rivers Coquet and Wansbeck and intersected by the Font, the whole district with its eastern seaboard and gradually rising ground towards the west, is particularly well adapted for thorough drainage. The water supply also is naturally good in most parts, while, if springs are not found, it is possible to tap the ground water at almost every part, and on this the Colliery districts exclusively depend. It is fortunate that the coal district lies almost entirely to the east. We are thus saved from the danger of having large Colliery Villages inland, where their drainage would be a source of danger by contaminating our natural water-courses.

Divisions of the District.—As usual, for convenience, and because the life and habits are so distinct, I have divided the district into Colliery and Agricultural; and the highway intersecting the district between Morpeth Borough and Felton almost exactly separates the one from the other. The County Asylum also forms a community by itself, because most of the inmates are drawn from outside the district. I have, therefore, given separate statistics for it, but must, for total returns, consider it as part of the district. This makes our death-rate appear much higher than it would otherwise be, but the corrected rates can be found on reference to the Tables.

Industries.—The chief industries, as indicated by the divisions, are Colliery and Agricultural. The two Woollen Factories (for which a register is now kept) which at one time provided work for a considerable number, now only employ some half-dozen.

Population.—The Agricultural population, if not falling off, is now practically at a standstill, whilst the Collieries are giving work to a rapidly increasing population. The Agricultural population may be put down, as last year, at 4,500, whilst the Colliery, which was underestimated last year, cannot now have a population under 12,500, and as estimated per house, should be rather over this figure. The Colliery population is spread over an area of some 60 square miles, the larger villages being, Broomhill (including Swarland Terrace and Chevington Drift), Widdrington, Stobswood, Linton, Pegswood, and North Seaton.

Housing.—On the whole, the Colliery population is well housed. I have had little to complain of as regards overcrowding, but ventilation does not receive enough attention in the construction of those houses. Too often only the lower sashes of windows are made to open and in the upper stories the windows are set at too low a level, so that the rooms cannot receive proper ventilation.

Byelaws.—The Byelaws which came into effect during the year are of incalculable value in regulating the sanitary arrangements of new buildings in the district.

Improvements.—Although there is much to be desired in improvements in the drainage about farms in the Agricultural district, yet those are so isolated that there is not much contamination of the natural water-courses, but much might be said as to the sanitary condition of farm houses and steadings. Too often manure heaps are left to fester in close proximity to houses. Too little attention is paid to cleanliness of byres and out-houses, and far too little importance is attached to the necessity for cattle having fresh air, proper ventilation and sufficiency of light. Hence we have in our district many cases of disease amongst cattle, and chief amongst those, tuberculosis. Although other theories have been brought forward, it has been sufficiently proved that tuberculosis in cattle can be transmitted to the human subject, so that too much importance cannot be attached to health amongst cattle. I am glad to say

that many important improvements have been effected, both in the Agricultural and in the Colliery districts, in the drainage and sewerage. Details of those will be found in your Sanitary Inspector's Report, embodied in this Report. There are, however, still some conspicuous cases of pollution of streams which have not yet been attended to, although attention has been called to them. Although not yet effected, sanitary improvements are either in process or will be carried out at Netherwitton, Angerton, Middleton, and Chevington Wood Houses. A Burial Ground at Chevington has been approved, and is in process of construction.

Scavenging.—The removal of refuse is now being more systematically done, and the scavenging of the district is improved.

Dairies, &c.—Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk Shops have received attention, and a few new licenses granted, but not before the necessary alterations to meet the requirements of the Byelaws were carried out.

### VITAL STATISTICS.

In considering the Statistics it is important to remember that in your district is the County Asylum, drawing patients from all parts of Northumberland.

Death-rate.—The total number of deaths for the year was 368, and of these 123 occurred in the Asylum. Our total death-rate thus appears as 21.6 per 1,000, but if we deduct those dying in the Asylum, who did not belong to the district, the real death-rate for your district is only 14.6 per 1,000, as against 17.9 in 1904. In the Agricultural division 34 deaths occurred, which is equal to a rate per 1,000 of 7.5; whilst in the Colliery locality there were 214 deaths, equivalent to a rate of 17.1 per 1,000. To calculate the death-rate from disease, which I consider the true gauge of the health of a district, deaths from premature birth, accidents at birth, and accidents generally, must be deducted; these, in 1905, numbered 42, so that the death-rate from disease in your district was only 12.1 per 1,000. It is worthy of note that during December the death-rate from disease in the whole district was 4.1 per 1,000, one of the lowest on record. I am glad to report a considerable reduction in the infantile death-rate. Infantile diarrhoea has been much less prevalent, and the death-rate per 1,000 births of children under 1 year, is 140, as compared with 195 in 1904. There has been a

gradual reduction of late years in the number of deaths from tubercular diseases. This, although slight, is the case for 1905. The death-rate from all tubercular diseases being 1.8 per 1,000, from phthisis pulmonalis 1.2, and from all respiratory diseases (including phthisis), 3 per 1,000. Cancer seems somewhat on the increase, giving a rate of .76, and heart disease 1.4 per 1,000. Deaths from infectious diseases are reduced from 49 in 1904, to 18, which is equal to a rate of .10 per 1,000.

Birth-rate.—The birth-rate for the year is higher than has yet been recorded in your district, 497 have occurred, which gives a rate per 1,000 of 29.2, as compared with 28.7 of the previous year.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

These have been less numerous than in the preceding year, chiefly owing to the reduction in cases of scarlet fever. Small-pox has been absent, but the Hospital is fully equipped for any emergency.

Diphtheria has been more prevalent, and confined almost entirely to the north-east corner of the district, indeed two-thirds of all the infectious disease list is furnished from that quarter. Ten cases of this disease were reported from the Broomhill district. Alterations in the sewerage may partly account for this. The water supply is perfect, and the milk is good, but want of cleanliness in many houses, especially in Chevington Drift, I feel certain, accounts for much of the infectious disease reported from that quarter. An epidemic of sore throats, some of which had been slight and escaped recognition, gave rise to a small outbreak of diphtheria amongst the children attending Widdrington School in the early part of the year. Two cases were reported from Pegswood, and one from North Seaton. These were well isolated and gave rise to no epidemic.

Erysipelas.—Only sporadic cases of erysipelas have occurred, and these without exception from the Broomhill district.

Scarlet Fever.—The epidemic which threatened to become serious in January at Broomhill fortunately, when the School Authorities took more stringent measures of exclusion of affected families, began to subside and almost disappeared by the end of February, but reappeared to a slighter extent in May and June. Only sporadic cases have been reported since then. After the

summer holiday season, an epidemic occurred amongst the children attending school at Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, and a small epidemic spread into your district at Woodhorn and North Seaton Villages. Only two cases out of a total of 87 proved fatal, and these amongst children under five.

Typhoid or Enteric Fever.—Twenty-one cases have been reported, as against 19 in 1904; but 7 of those occurred in the County Asylum. Of the remaining 14, one was at Pegswood, two in a house near Morpeth Station, and the other 11 in Broomhill. I could not discover the origin of the isolated case at Pegswood, but the two near Morpeth were undoubtedly brought from Blyth. The cases in Broomhill occurred in three distinct areas—4 in North Broomhill, in which no connection could be traced; 4 in Swarland Terrace, all close together, the one following the other by direct infection; and 3 in Chevington Drift, all close together. In this district the ash-pits are in much too close proximity to the houses, and during wet weather the yards, which in many cases are on a lower level than the road, become flooded. This, I have no doubt, has been the cause of infection. sewage after heavy rainfalls is carried into the yards and often invades the houses. Now that a proper and adequate sewerage system has been carried out in this district, I hope we may have fewer cases of this fatal disease. A bucket system has been carried out in almost all the Collieries, and I am glad to report that North Seaton, Linton, Stobswood, and in fact all the other districts have been free from the disease, and Pegswood, where an epidemic occurred in 1904, has only had one isolated case in the past year. Excluding the Asylum, only one of those cases proved fatal.

Puerperal Fever.—Only one case of this fever was reported, and that in Broomhill, when scarlet fever was rampant.

Other Infectious Diseases.—During the year, whooping cough, measles, and mumps have been epidemic, and threatened to become so acute in certain districts that school closure had to be resorted to at Widdrington, Cambo, Longhorsley, and Hartburn. With these precautions the epidemics were checked, and what might have been serious was confined to certain families. Five deaths were due to measles and its complications, showing that it is one of the most fatal of the epidemic diseases and deserves more careful nursing than is usually bestowed upon it.

General Remarks.—Whilst we may congratulate ourselves on the absence of small-pox and the general reduction in the number of infectious diseases, we must regret the small but fatal epidemic of diphtheria in the Widdrington and Broomhill districts, an epidemic which occurred, for the most part, in isolated farms, and must have been communicated by personal contact either at school or at public meetings. It is so very conspicuous, that I need hardly draw attention to the fact that Broomhill is the *bête noir* of the whole district. One hundred and three notifications of infectious diseases have come from Broomhill and Widdrington, and only 33 from the rest of the district. It is worthy of remark that North Seaton, Linton, and Stobswood are very free from contagious diseases, whilst Pegswood, usually rather prolific, has this year been remarkably free; this may be due to the improvement in the drainage. It is to be hoped that Broomhill, which has more of an urban than a rural character, with its new sewage system, just completed, may show improvement in future. In the general death-rate, it is interesting to note the returns from the three largest Colliery Villages and for comparison the Agricultural district.

District.	No. of Houses.	Approx. Population.	No. of Deaths.	Rate per 1,000.
Broomhill ...	750	3,990	75	18·8
Pegswood ...	440	2,356	36	15·2
North Seaton ...	332	1,670	28	16·7
Agricultural ...	—	4,500	34	7·5

In conclusion, I must thank the members of the Council, and more especially the members of the Hospital Committee, for the help they have so often afforded me.

(Signed)

J. P. PHILIP,

Medical Officer of Health.

TABLE 1.—Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1903  
and previous years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each year.	BIRTHS.		Deaths under 1 year of age.		Deaths at all ages.		Total Deaths in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Non- Registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents registered in Public Institutions beyond the District.	Nett Deaths at all ages,	
		Number	Rate*	Number	Rate per 1000 Births regis'trd.	Number	Rate*				Number	Rate*
1902	15,500	428	27.6	45	105	295	19	94	94	4	205	13
1903	16,200	437	26.9	53	121	292	18	92	90	3	205	12.6
1904	16,500	474	28.7	93	195	388	23.5	92	91	2	296	17.9
1905	17,000	497	29.2	70	140	368	21.6	123	121	3	250	14.6

\* Rates calculated per 1,000 of the population.

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water), 74,748.

Total population at all ages	..	..	..	..	..	14,832
Number of inhabited houses	..	..	..	..	..	2,925
Average number of persons per house	..	..	..	..	..	5.5

} at Census of 1901.

N.B.—The Institutions within the district receiving sick and infirm persons from outside the district are, Northumberland County Pauper Lunatic Asylum and the Isolation Hospital of Morpeth Urban District Council.

The Institutions outside the district receiving sick and infirm persons from the district are, Morpeth Workhouse, the Victoria Cottage Hospital, Morpeth, and the Royal Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

TABLE II.

NAMES OF LOCALITIES.	COLLIERY LOCALITY.				AGRICULTURAL LOCALITY.			
	Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births Registered.	Deaths at all Ages.	Deaths under 1 year.	Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births Registered.	Deaths at all Ages.	Deaths under 1 year.
YEAR.	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>
1902    ...    ...	11,080	358	165	42	4,420	70	36	3
1903    ...    ...	11,743	357	160	49	4,459	80	45	4
1904    ...    ...	12,000	406	225	90	4,500	72	41	3
1905    ...    ...	12,500	442	214	64	4,500	58	34	6

TABLE III.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFIED DURING THE YEAR 1905.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.						NOTIFIED IN EACH LOCALITY.		
	At all Ages.	At ages—Years.					Colliery.	Agri-cultural.	Asylum.
		Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.			
Small-pox ...	14		4	5	4	1	14		
Cholera ...	4		2	2			4		
Diphtheria ...	9			2	1	5	9		
Membranous croup ...	87	2	25	41	12	7	80	5	2
Erysipelas ...									
Scarlet fever ...	21			7	6	8	14		7
Typhus fever ...									
Enteric fever ...									
Relapsing fever ...									
Continued fever ...	1					1	1		
Puerperal fever ...									
Plague ...									
Totals ...	136	2	31	57	22	23	122	5	9

**TABLE IV.**  
**CAUSES OF, AND AGES AT, DEATH DURING YEAR 1905.**

Causes of Death.	DEATHS IN WHOLE DISTRICT AT SUBJOINED AGES.							DEATHS IN LOCALITIES.		Total Deaths in Public Insti'tns in the District.
	All ages.	Under 1	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards	Colliery.	Agri-cultural.	
Small-pox ... ..										
Measles ... ..	5		5					5		
Scarlet Fever ... ..	2		2					2		
Whooping Cough ... ..	1		1						1	
Diphtheria & Mem- branous Croup ... ..	6		2	4				6		
Croup ... ..	3		2	1				2	1	
Fever } Typhus ... ..	1					1		1		2
} Enteric ... ..										
} other continued										
Epidemic Influenza ... ..										
Cholera... ..										
Plague ... ..										
Diarrhœa ... ..	12	8	3			1		12		14
Enteritis ... ..										
Puerperal Fever ... ..										
Erysipelas ... ..										
Other Septic diseases ..										
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ... ..	21			3	3	15		19	2	16
Other Tubercular Diseases ... ..	11	5	4	1	1			11		2
Cancer, Malignant Disease ... ..	13					7	6	12	1	2
Bronchitis ... ..	18	6	4			2	3	14	1	2
Pneumonia ... ..	13	8	5	1		2		15	1	6
Pleurisy ... ..										3
Other Diseases of Respiratory Organs										
Alcoholism										
Cirrhosis of Liver }										1
Venereal Diseases ..										
Premature Birth ..	18	18						15	3	
Diseases & Accidents of Parturition ... ..	5	5						5		
Heart Diseases ... ..	24	2	2	1		8	11	20	4	13
Accidents ... ..	17	1	2		2	10	2	15	2	2
Suicides ... ..	2				1	1		2		
All other causes ... ..	76	17	6		3	15	35	59	17	60
All Causes ... ..	248	70	38	11	10	62	57	214	34	123

N.B.—In recording the facts under the various headings of Tables I, II, III, and IV, attention has been given to the notes on the tables.

TABLE V.—Infantile Mortality during the year 1905.  
DEATHS FROM STATED CAUSES IN WEEKS AND MONTHS UNDER 1 YEAR OF AGE.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	Total under 1 year.												Total Deaths under One Year.				
	Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 1 month.	1-2 months.	2-3 months.	3-4 months.	4-5 months.	5-6 months.	6-7 months.	7-8 months.		8-9 months.	9-10 months.	10-11 months.	11-12 months.
Diarrhoeal Diseases	{	Diarrhoea, all forms															5
		Enteritis (not tuberculous)														1	2
		Gastritis, Gastro-intestinal Catarrh											1			1	2
		Premature Birth	11	2		3	16	1									18
Wasting Diseases.	{	Congenital Defects	2	2					1								6
		Injury at Birth	2				2	1									2
		Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus	1	1			2	2		2					1		13
		Tuberculous Meningitis									2						3
Tuberculous Diseases.	{	Tuberculous Peritonitis: Tabes Mesenterica															
		Other Tuberculous Diseases															
		Convulsions		1											1		1
		Bronchitis	1	1			2									1	6
Other Causes	{	Pneumonia										3	1				8
		Other Causes	1	1			2										2
			18	8		3	29	4	6	6	3	2	6	2	2	4	

Population estimated to middle of 1905, 17,000. Births in the year, 497. Deaths from all causes at all ages, 371.

## Sanitary Surveyor's Report.

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS,—

Gentlemen,— I have much pleasure in presenting this report for your consideration, covering the period of the tenure of office of my predecessor, Mr. J. M. McGregor from January 1st to June 26th, and also of mine from the latter date to December 31st.

The past year has brought with it a great change in the work of the Sanitary Department, upon which has devolved the operation of the building byelaws, adopted by the Council in July, and through which obligations are laid upon persons proposing to erect habitable dwellings, to so construct them, as to obviate the possibility of such insanitary conditions as at present exist, and to which your attention was drawn by Dr. Philip in his Annual Report for 1904.

**Infectious Diseases.**—The infectious diseases under notification have received every attention, and disinfection has been carried out in 11 cases, principally enteric fever. An inspection of the sanitary arrangements did not disclose any glaring defect, or any certain cause to which the disease could be attributed.

**Scavenging.**—With the exception of the latter part of the contract term for Widdrington Civil Parish, the scavenging throughout the district has been fairly well carried out, although I regret to report that in many cases the tenants and owners do not recognise the evil of overloading ashpits and allowing them to remain in that condition. Especially is this regrettable in the case of a combined privy and ashpit, as the back outlet to the privy becomes blocked up, and persons using same in this condition are running great risk of contracting disease. Four statutory notices and many formal requests by letter, have had to be served during the year, to secure the abatement of such nuisances.

**Sanitary Improvements.**—Efforts have been made to obtain sanitary improvement to dwelling-houses, with, considering the short space of time so occupied, very satisfactory results, as under :—

Cresswell. New privies, fitted with loose, galvanized receptacles, and new ashpits and outhouses.

Linton Mill.—Additional sewerage and settling tank.

Morpeth Mart.—New sanitary pipe sewer, with settling tank and filter beds.

Morpeth Station, N.E.R.—New sanitary pipe sewer, with settling tank and filter beds.

Newton Park Farm.—New drainage to all buildings, and settling tank.

Stobswood Farm.—An entire new system of sewerage to dwelling-houses, stables, byres, &c., with settling tank and filter bed.

Spital Hill.—New drainage system to farm buildings, and settling tank.

Widdrington Village.—New drainage, with branch drains and trapped gullies to three cottages.

West Thirston.—Re-construction of drainage to cottages, glazed sanitary pipes taking the place of ordinary field pipes.

Woodhorn.—Construction of settling tank and filter beds for the treatment of the village sewage, and small settling tanks for isolated dwellings.

District Generally.—Repairs to existing ashpits and drains, and the provision of trapped gullies. The property owners complied with formal request by letter for the above-mentioned reforms with one exception, when the powers of the Public Health Act, 1865, were exercised, by the serving of a statutory notice. (Re Cresswell, monthly report for September.)

Engineering.—The following works have been carried out or are in progress :—

Broomhill.—133 lineal yards of glazed sanitary pipe sewer, with manholes and branch connections, to Warkworth Terrace.

Red Row.—300 lineal yards of glazed sanitary pipe sewer, with manholes and branch connections. Sewage disposal works, consisting of septic tank and primary and secondary bacterial filter beds. Works of street paving are proposed for certain back streets, and, acting upon your instructions to proceed with the work, I have,

in compliance with the requirements of Section 150 of the Public Health Act, 1875, prepared plans, sections, and an estimate. Application has been successfully made to the Local Government Board, for Urban Powers, the order being granted to date from the 10th February. Notices will be served and, after the lapse of the time specified therein, the work will be undertaken.

Newbiggin Links.—Scheme of water distribution to fifty houses, consisting of 2in. cast iron main, with separate house service, and stop tap in each case.

New Buildings.—Since the adoption of the building byelaws, plans have been submitted and approved of sanctioning the erection of:—

	Approx. Value.
2 Chapels .....	£1000
20 Dwelling-houses in Flats .....	7000
6 Dwelling-houses with Shops .....	2400
Alterations and additions to existing Property .....	350
Public Hall .....	900
	<hr/>
Total approx. value .....	£11650
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Alterations and additions to existing Property .....	350

(Signed)

ANDREW ADAMS,

Sanitary Surveyor.